



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



02 4751 3298 | bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 132 Macquarie Rd Springwood NSW 2777

New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Teachers

21 November 2017

On behalf of some of my former teaching colleagues, I share some of their stories to give a voice to those at the coalface. Kerrie says:

I feel that the work of a teacher is underestimated and undervalued by the community, and government. I have been teaching for a long while and the changes and increasing workload have been phenomenal. I no longer encourage young people to choose teaching as a career. The personal rewards are few nowadays and the cost is great.

These are a few of my reasons:

I travel an hour each way to work, often leaving home at 6am and returning at 7pm. I rarely see my husband and children before I leave and don't have much time with them in the evening. I need to do school work (programming, marking, lesson preparation, assessment, AP work, responding to emails, reports, entering, collating and collecting data etc).

When I finally go to bed exhausted, I often wake from 1:30am onwards and cannot return to sleep due to worries and concerns about teaching. I am not alone; many of my colleagues have their sleep disturbed.

The behaviour of students is increasingly impacting on teaching. Many students with special needs are in mainstream classes and schools are seriously underequipped to manage these extra demands.

Whoever thought introducing 5 new syllabuses at the same time was a good idea? Enough said! Add to this the continuums, frameworks and LMBR changes to schools.

Reporting has become a cumbersome and tiresome process that does not give parents MUCH USEFUL INFORMATION at all. I would say that a

minimum of 72 hours straight of teacher's own time is devoted to reports twice a year. You can tell it is report time through the amount of sickness that befalls teachers: lower immunity and high stress

The exorbitant workload means that the quality of teaching diminishes. There are not enough hours in the day to achieve all that has to be done... There was a time you looked forward to a weekend and holidays as there might be time for recuperation, relaxation, exercise and time with the family. Those days are long gone.

Another teacher friend hailing from rural New South Wales tells me of the impact of feeling demoralised by a system that does not value teachers' professionalism, time and dedication — how incredibly isolating and discouraging this is — despite being such a remarkable teacher and a few years into a relatively new career change; despite kicking substantial goals, loved by his students and their parents; despite being a progressive thinker and having secured a degree with distinction; despite having the most positive impact on some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable kids; and, despite being a fantastic, energised, intelligent and committed teacher.

It is very sad.

My last comment is for another very special teacher in recognition and commendation of one of the very best. I pay tribute to Craig McGown, head teacher of music at Winmalee High School. Craig McGown has also spent the past 12 years conducting the Pulse Public Schools Concert Band. He is well known and revered throughout the music world. Sadly, he now finishes up with Pulse.

The band has been a significant part of Craig's life: an unpaid commitment through which he has brought passion, talent and first-class large ensemble music into our children's lives. Mr McGown's musical expectations of young people in the Blue Mountains and Western Sydney were high.

Performances at major events in the Opera House and Sydney Town Hall and at New South Wales State Band Championships are testament to the hard work Craig McGown and the children put in each Wednesday night — rehearsals and performances both amazing and rewarding. Successful music careers have been built on Craig's skill and dedication: professional musicians, music therapists, music teachers and students accepted into and graduating from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Craig McGown is a proud Western Sydney music educator and he is well loved: Thank you for sharing yourself with our children and our families. Music has changed our lives because of you.

Next year Mr McGown takes his family on an exchange to Canada. I have no doubt that the middle school in Bragg Creek, Alberta, will adore and appreciate you, Craig. Your inspirational music-making will thankfully see a more broad and international impact. Our loss is Canada's gain.

Finally, you deserved better treatment from a system that demands teachers fit and tick boxes. You deserved to be valued more by some who just do not get it.

I absolutely trust that you will be honoured and respected beyond measure in your next musical adventure. I hope our paths cross again.

Thank you, Craig McGown, and take care. You are salt of the earth — an impressive human. I thank all our fabulous teachers: At this time of year, during report writing, feeling weary and in desperate need of a break, you still give our precious children — our future — everything you have got.